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EXAMINER

VAN DOREN, BETH

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3623

DATE MAILED: 12/11/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

09/740,515

Applicant(s)

KROTKI, KAROL P.

Examiner

Beth Van Doren

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 October 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4 and 7-10 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4, 7, 9 and 10 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) 8 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DETAILED ACTION**

### ***Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114***

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 10/17/06 has been entered.
2. Claims 7-8 have been amended. Claims 1-4 and 7-10 are pending in this application.

### ***Response to Amendment***

3. Applicant's amendments to claims 7-8 are sufficient to overcome the 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, rejections set forth in the previous office action.

### ***Response to Arguments***

4. Applicant's arguments with regards to Decision Analyst, Inc. ([www.decisionanalyst.com](http://www.decisionanalyst.com)) and Probability Definitions ([stat.wvu.edu/SRS/modules/ProbDef/urn.html](http://stat.wvu.edu/SRS/modules/ProbDef/urn.html)) have been fully considered, but they are not persuasive. In the remarks, Applicant argues that the prior art does not teach or suggest (1) adjusting weights of the remaining members of the available survey panel to compensate for removal of the first set of members from the available survey panel and thereby to make the remaining members of the available survey panel match the demographics, (2) the selection probabilities of additional members being respectively proportional to the adjusted weights to compensate for the removal of the first set of members from the available survey panel, specifically Probability Definitions does not teach this, (3) a weight factor proportionate to the number of original members in the group over the number of remaining

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members in the group in the available panel (claim 3), (4) one or more weighting factors are multiples to the weights of the remaining members of the available survey panel to compensate for the removal of people who have been previously given a survey within a certain time period, (5) a removal weighting factor, a selection weighting factor, and an original weighting factor, and that (6) there is no motivation to combine Decision Analyst, Inc. and Probability Definitions

In response to argument (1), Examiner respectfully disagrees. On page 3, Decision Analyst, Inc. specifically discusses building balanced, representative panels that match the demographic profile of the US or the relevant target market. This sampling is done across multiple variables using a sampling system. Page 4 discloses that the composition of the sample chosen is checked against target demographics to see if weighting needs to occur. See page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, which further discuss balanced, representative panels. Furthermore, Decision Analyst, Inc. discusses that when a first group of members is selected, these members are removed from eligibility. Thus, the number of potential members for future panels reduces with time, thus the numbers must be adjusted. Probability Definitions was relied upon to teach a mathematical means to perform the removal of Decision Analyst, Inc. Therefore, Examiner believes that the combination of Decision Analyst, Inc. and Probability Definitions meets the claim limitations.

In response to argument (2), Examiner respectfully disagrees. Probability Definitions was relied on to disclose that when sampling without replacement, selection probabilities change to compensate for removal of a member of a population (See page 1, section 1-2, wherein in sampling with Replacement, selection probabilities incorporate removal). Decision Analyst, Inc.

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discloses selecting, with processor, additional members from the available survey panel for a second survey while compensating for the removal of the first set of members from the available survey panel in page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1. Decision Analyst, Inc. was further relied on to teach adjusted weights because the groups are originally chosen based on a factor related to demographics, and then when the first group selected, this group is removed from eligibility, thus giving the remaining members a higher weight of being selected since the number in the pool is decreased. Examiner notes that the selection probability is proportional to the adjusted weight because the adjusted weight relates to the number of members remaining in the pool. Thus, the probability of being selected is proportional to the adjusted probability of a member.

In response to argument (3), Examiner respectfully disagrees. Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches that weights of the additional members are modified to compensate for the group members removed from the panel. Thus, when the first group selected is removed from eligibility, the remaining members have a higher chance (weighting factor) of being selected since the number in the pool is decreased. See page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1. Examiner relied on Probability Definitions to disclose sampling without replacement and changing selection probabilities to compensate for removal of a member of a population. See page 1, section 1-2, wherein in sampling with Replacement, selection probabilities incorporate removal. Probability Definitions shows using fractional proportions to show the weight of each member being selected. Therefore, Examiner maintains that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to

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use a weight factor that reflects the sampling without replacement in order to increase the motivation of the panel members by not overusing said members. See at least page 7.

In response to argument (4), Examiner respectfully disagrees. When a first group of members is selected, these members are removed from eligibility. Thus, the remaining members have a higher chance of being selected since the number in the pool is decreased. Thus the removal of members influences the probabilities of selection for the other members. See pages 3 and 4. See also page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1.

In response to argument (5), Examiner respectfully disagrees. Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches weighting factors that influence selection. An original weighting factor is used to match the members of the available survey panel to the demographics of the general population and a removal weighting factor to compensate for all of the members of the panel removed from the panel. See page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein the groups are originally chosen based on a factor, and then when the first group selected, this group is removed from eligibility, thus giving the remaining members a higher weight of being selected since the number in the pool is decreased. Examiner set forth that Decision Analyst, Inc. did not expressly disclose a selection weighting factor to deal with a non-proportionate selection, but relied on Probability Definitions to teach this element. Therefore, Examiner has established a prima facie case of obviousness.

In response to argument (6), In response to applicant's argument that there is no suggestion to combine the references, the examiner recognizes that obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either in the

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references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992). In this case, Decision Analyst, Inc. discloses sampling to choose survey respondents and then removing these respondents so the respondents are not selected again for at least six month (i.e. not replacing/restoring the respondents to the pool). Sampling without replacement is old and notoriously well known in statistics, wherein the probabilities of remaining members are updated for the removal of members. See also page 7, sections 1-3, of Decision Analyst, Inc., which discusses the rationale for removing respondents from a pool. Thus, examiner maintains that there is motivation to combine Probability Definitions with Decision Analyst, Inc. based on the teaching and motivation found in the references as well as in what is the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art.

#### ***Allowable Subject Matter***

5. Claim 8 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Examiner notes that she reserves the right to review this allowable subject matter in light of the 105 requirement transmitted herewith.

#### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person

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having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. Claims 1-4 and 9-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Decision Analyst, Inc. ([www.decisionanalyst.com](http://www.decisionanalyst.com)) in view of Probability Definitions ([stat.wvu.edu/SRS/modules/ProbDef/urn.html](http://stat.wvu.edu/SRS/modules/ProbDef/urn.html)).

As per claim 1, Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches a computer-implemented method comprising:

identifying a group within an available survey panel including a plurality of members, the group having predetermined characteristics (See page 3, section 1, page 5, section 1, page 8, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein a group having predetermined characteristics are identified);

determining a weight for each of the members, said weight being derived to match the members to demographics of the general public (See page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein the groups are originally chosen based on a factor related to demographics);

selecting a first set of members from the group for a first survey (See page 3, section 1, page 7, section 1, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein the members are selected);

temporarily removing the selected first set of members from the available survey panel (See at least page 7, sections 1-2; wherein the first members are removed and blocked from similar surveys for a minimum of six months);

adjusting weights of the remaining members of the available survey panel to compensate for the removal of the first set of members from the available survey panel and thereby to make



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the remaining members of the available survey panel match the demographics (See page 3, section 1, and page 4 ("data weighting"). See also page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein the groups are originally chosen based on a factor related to demographics, and then when the first group selected, this group is removed from eligibility, thus giving the remaining members a higher weight of being selected since the number in the pool is decreased); and

selecting, with processor, additional members from the available survey panel for a second survey while compensating for the removal of the first set of members from the available survey panel (See page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein additional members are drawn to complete surveys in the same product category, this drawing occurring with the first group removed from eligibility, thus making the chance of selection is higher for the available members).

However, while Decision Analyst, Inc. discloses choosing survey panel members by product without replacing the members to the pool (i.e. sampling without replacement), Decision Analyst, Inc. does not expressly disclose selection probabilities that compensate for the removal of these members, where selection probabilities of the additional members being respectively proportional to the adjusted weights to compensate for the removal of the first set of members from the available survey panel.

Probability Definitions discloses that when sampling without replacement, selection probabilities change to compensate for removal of a member of a population (See page 1, section 1-2, wherein in sampling with Replacement, selection probabilities incorporate removal).

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Decision Analyst, Inc. discloses sampling to choose survey respondents and then removing these respondents so the respondents are not selected again for at least six month (i.e. not replacing/restoring the respondents to the pool). Sampling without replacement is old and notoriously well known in statistics, wherein the probabilities of remaining members are updated for the removal of members. Probability Definitions discloses this sampling without replacements. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to remove the survey panel members of Decision Analyst, Inc. by compensating selection probabilities for the removal of members of the population in order to increase the quality of the survey data by limiting the number of surveys given to member, thus keeping panel members "fresh" and "healthy" by not spamming the members with surveys. See page 7, sections 1-3, which discusses the rationale for removing respondents from a pool.

As per claim 2, Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches choosing survey panel members by product without replacing the members to the pool (i.e. sampling without replacement) and then, after removal, selecting additional members (See page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein additional members are drawn to complete surveys in the same product category, this drawing occurring with the first group removed from eligibility, thus making the chance of selection is higher for the available members). However, Decision Analyst, Inc. does not expressly disclose and Probability Definitions discloses adjusting weight to increase the selection probabilities of remaining members in the group (See page 1, section 1-2, wherein in sampling with Replacement the probabilities of the remaining members increase, such as the probability going from 6/10 to 5/9).

Decision Analyst, Inc. discloses sampling to choose survey respondents and then removing these respondents so the respondents are not selected again for at least six month (i.e. not replacing/restoring the respondents to the pool). Sampling without replacement is old and notoriously well known in statistics, wherein the probabilities of remaining members are updated for the removal of members. Probability Definitions discloses this sampling without replacements. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to remove the survey panel members of Decision Analyst, Inc. by compensating selection probabilities for the removal of members of the population in order to increase the quality of the survey data by limiting the number of surveys given to member, thus keeping panel members "fresh" and "healthy" by not spamming the members with surveys. See page 7, sections 1-3, which discusses the rationale for removing respondents from a pool.

As per claim 3, Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches wherein weights of the additional members are modified to compensate for the group members removed from the panel (See page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein the first group selected is removed from eligibility, thus giving the remaining members a higher weighting factor of being selected since the number in the pool is decreased). However, Decision Analyst, Inc. does not expressly disclose using a weight factor proportionate to the number of original members in the group over the number of remaining members in the group in the available panel.

Probability Definitions teach sampling without replacement and changing selection probabilities to compensate for removal of a member of a population (See page 1, section 1-2, wherein in sampling with Replacement, selection probabilities incorporate removal).

Decision Analyst, Inc. discloses sampling a survey panel to choose survey respondents and then removing these respondents so the respondents are not selected again for at least six month (i.e. not replacing/restoring the respondents to the pool). Sampling without replacement is old and notoriously well known in statistics, wherein the probability of selection is adjusted to compensate for the removal of the members, as shown by Probability Definitions. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to use a weight factor that reflects the sampling without replacement in order to increase the motivation of the panel members by not overusing said members. See at least page 7.

As per claim 4, Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches wherein multiple groups are identified within the available survey panel, and members of these multiple groups are selected for the survey and removed from the available survey panel, and wherein the multiple groups are modified to compensate for the removal of the members of the group from the available survey panel (See page 3, section 1, page 5, page 7, section, page 8, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein multiple groups exist within the available panel and once a member takes a survey within a specific product category, the member is removed from the pool. The subsequent chance of the additional members of being selected is compensated and these members have a higher probability of selection).

However, Decision Analyst, Inc. does not expressly disclose modifying selection probabilities to compensate for the removal of members.

Probability Definitions discloses that when sampling without replacement, selection probabilities change to compensate for removal of a member of a population (See page 1, section 1-2, wherein in sampling with Replacement, selection probabilities incorporate removal).

Decision Analyst, Inc. discloses sampling to choose survey respondents and then removing these respondents so the respondents are not selected again for at least six month (i.e. not replacing/restoring the respondents to the pool). Sampling without replacement is old and notoriously well known in statistics, wherein the probabilities of remaining members are updated for the removal of members. Probability Definitions discloses this sampling without replacements. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to remove the survey panel members of Decision Analyst, Inc. by compensating selection probabilities for the removal of members of the population in order to increase the quality of the survey data by limiting the number of surveys given to member, thus keeping panel members "fresh" and "healthy" by not spamming the members with surveys. See page 7, sections 1-3, which discusses the rationale for removing respondents from a pool.

As per claim 9, Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches wherein one or more weighting factors are multiples to the weights of the remaining members of the available survey panel to compensate for the removal of people who have been previously given a survey within a certain time period (See pages 3 and 4. See also page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein the first group selected is removed from eligibility, thus giving the remaining members a higher chance or weighting factor of being selected since the number in the pool is decreased).

As per claim 10, Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches weighting factors used and including an original weighting factor to match the members of the available survey panel to the demographics of the general population and a removal weighting factor to compensate for all of the members of the panel removed from the panel (See page 7, sections 1-2, page 8, section 1,

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page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein the groups are originally chosen based on a factor, and then when the first group selected, this group is removed from eligibility, thus giving the remaining members a higher weight of being selected since the number in the pool is decreased). However, Decision Analyst, Inc. does not expressly disclose a selection weighting factor to deal with a non-proportionate selection.

Probability Definitions discloses that when sampling without replacement, selection probabilities change to compensate for removal of a member of a population (See page 1, section 1-2, wherein selection factors change to compensate for the group being non-proportional to the original group).

Decision Analyst, Inc. discloses sampling a survey panel to choose survey respondents and then removing these respondents so the respondents are not selected again for at least six month (i.e. not replacing/restoring the respondents to the pool). Sampling without replacement is old and notoriously well known in statistics, wherein the selection-weighting factors of the members remaining in the population are adjusted to increase the probability of selection, as disclosed by Decision Analyst, Inc. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include selection weighting factors in order to more properly manage the selection of appropriate panel members by ensuring only eligible members are chosen. See pages 7 and 14.

7. Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Decision Analyst, Inc. ([www.decisionanalyst.com](http://www.decisionanalyst.com)) in view of Probability Definitions

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([stat.wvu.edu/SRS/modules/ProbDef/urn.html](http://stat.wvu.edu/SRS/modules/ProbDef/urn.html)) and in further view of White ([www.cems.uwe.ac.uk/~pwhite/](http://www.cems.uwe.ac.uk/~pwhite/)).

As per claim 7, Decision Analyst, Inc. teaches selecting a first set of members from the group for a first survey (See page 3, section 1, page 7, section 1, page 8, section 1, page 9, section 1, and page 14, section 1, wherein the members are selected). However, neither Decision Analyst, Inc. or Probability Definitions expressly discloses and White discloses that the step of selecting a first set of members includes:

determining an interval value that is equal to a summation of the weights of the members of the available survey panel divided by the number of the first set of members to be selected (See page 3, wherein an interval is calculated that is  $N$  divided by  $k$  (which is the number of units selected). The weights of the members in the claim would each be 1, since no members have yet to be removed, and thus the sum of the weights is equal to the number of members);

selecting a random number that is between zero and the interval value (See page 3, wherein a random number is chosen between one and  $k$ );

assigning an identification (ID) number to each of the members of the available survey panel (See page 3, where the population is numbered from 1 to  $N$  in an order);

determining a cumulative weight for each of the members of the available survey panel, the cumulative weight of each particular member being determined by a summation of the weight of the particular member and the weights of other members whose ID numbers are smaller than the ID number of the particular member (See page 3. The weights of the members in the claim would each be 1, since no members have yet to be removed, and thus the cumulative weight for each member is his number in the order); and

choosing the first set of members from the available survey panel, each of the first set of members having a cumulative weight that matches the sum of the random number and an integer multiple of the interval value (See page 3, where every  $k$ th member in the order is selected. The weights of the members in the claim would each be 1, since no members have yet to be removed. The cumulative weight for each member is his number in the order. Thus, on page 3, the 6<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 46<sup>th</sup>, etc. are chosen, which is the sum of the random number and an integer multiple of the interval value (i.e.  $6+0*20$ ,  $6+1*20$ ,  $6+2*20$ )).

Decision Analyst, Inc. discloses sampling to choose survey respondents and then removing these respondents so the respondents are not selected again for at least six month (i.e. not replacing/restoring the respondents to the pool). Sampling without replacement is old and notoriously well known in statistics, wherein the probabilities of remaining members are updated for the removal of members. Probability Definitions discloses this sampling without replacement. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to remove the survey panel members of Decision Analyst, Inc. by compensating selection probabilities for the removal of members of the population in order to increase the quality of the survey data by limiting the number of surveys given to member, thus keeping panel members "fresh" and "healthy" by not spamming the members with surveys. See page 7, sections 1-3, which discusses the rationale for removing respondents from a pool.

Further, White discloses systematic sampling, where every  $k$ th member (starting at a random number in the interval 1 to  $k$ ) is selected. Decision Analyst, Inc. specifically discloses sampling and Decision Analyst, Inc. and Probability Definitions disclose the management of the sample list. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the



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invention to draw members from the sample population of Decision Analyst, Inc. using systematic sampling (disclosed by White) in order to more accurately and precisely draw members of the population that are evenly spread throughout the population. See pages 3-4 of White.

**Conclusion**

8. This Office action has an attached requirement for information under 37 C.F.R. § 1.105. A complete response to this Office action must include a complete response to the attached requirement for information. The time period for reply to the attached requirement coincides with the time period for reply to this Office action.

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Christopher ("Environmental Sampling and Monitoring Primer") teaches systematic sampling.

"Survey Sampling Methods" ([www.statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm](http://www.statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm)) discloses different statistical ways to perform sampling for surveying purposes.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Beth Van Doren whose telephone number is (571) 272-6737. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 8:30-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

*bvd*  
bvd

December 5, 2006

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